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BOOK REVIEWS

The Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus. By MARION CLYDE WEIR. New York: Century Co., 1916. 12mo.

This is a conventional, but convenient and readable, translation in blank verse, with the lyrical passages done into English rhymes. To enter the lists against so consummate a poet as Mrs. Browning is very bold, and the issue scarcely doubtful. With Mrs. Browning away, perhaps higher words of praise might be found.

In testing a translation of the *Prometheus* one inclines instinctively to turn first to the Titan's sonorous invocation of nature at the moment when his tormentors have left him bound to the desolate rock. A comparison of renderings is not reassuring. One line of Mr. Weir's set beside the corresponding verse of Mrs. Browning is enough to show that he has not tallied an advance. For Mrs. Browning's

O holy Aether, and swift-winged winds,

Mr. Weir has

O divine Ether and swift-winged winds.

This is no gain. Indeed, the change from "holy" to "divine" vitiates both rhythm and tone; "holy" seems almost inevitable, while "Ether" is an anodyne.

Of course, the juxtaposition of single verses is unfair. Suppose we compare Mr. Weir's translation of the throbbing anapests which follow Prometheus' invocation,

Behold with what wickedness ground into dust
Through the oncoming centuries wrestle I must
Down the myriad years,

with Mrs. Browning's vigorous

Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of time!

Not only is the former rendering more commonplace, but it is less accurate than the latter. To speak of nothing else, Mrs. Browning's "down" is adverbial; Mr. Weir's preposition is weaker, as well as farther from the Greek. Searching with the best of predispositions, the present reviewer fails to find a passage of Mr. Weir's which reveals a poetic grandeur comparable with any one of many in Mrs. Browning, or, say, of Byron's paraphrase of the second choral ode.

In the main the versification is smooth, but resolutions and hypercatalectic verses are too frequent for entire comfort. Such lines as,

But they returned bringing back oracles,
and,

Hearing me through still further wilt thou marvel,
must be styled careless, if not worse. Whether the flavor of Greek lyric can be reproduced in rhymed verse may be a matter of opinion and taste, but rhyme must be careful. Little short of reprehensible is a rhyme like this:

Through others' wild resentment thus brought low;
And who of all the ill-starred race is so
Wretched as I?

The question, however, which the reader of the original must answer is this: "Do you feel that this translation is a faithful transcript?" In this instance the reply must be in the negative. But, for that matter, neither is Mrs. Browning's satisfactory. She is complex; Aeschylus is simple and straightforward. She has a grand style; Aeschylus is far grander. Truth is, he cannot be reproduced, and one is not to be blamed for having failed to accomplish the impossible.

Mr. Weir remarks in his preface that he had hoped to develop for the choruses "a form that would closely approximate the rhythms of the original, but after experimenting gave up the design." One might wish that he had persevered in the attempt. Arnold has shown that the only feasible method of translating Homer is to reproduce the hexameters. Success with the tragedy, in the opinion of the reviewer, must eschew blank verse and rhyme, and proceed along the same line as is suggested by Arnold. Mr. Weir expresses the justifiable conviction "that most of the complicated Greek meters and rhythms could be reproduced in English if a man of leisure and learning should undertake the task with sufficient diligence and enthusiasm." All that needs to be added to these four qualities is "genius."

A poem's baldest meaning may be carried over even by a prose translation, but not the subtle flavor which is the real essence. This inheres partly in the form. A translator must be content either to have constructed another genuine poem on the same theme, like Pope's *Iliad* or Browning's *Alcegis*, or else he must find some means of taking over both sense and form. The task seems hopeless, but the experiment would be worth while. An attempt to do the impossible is always inspiring, even though it be superogatory.

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Applied Latin: A Course for Beginners. By W. H. FREEMAN. Milton, Pa.: Weidenhamer & Co., 1916. Pp. 344+xliii.

For more than a quarter of a century most makers of first Latin books have consciously or unconsciously followed the standard set by such books as Collar and Daniell's *Beginner's Book*, published in 1886. The method followed